

EVALUATION OF TRUST IN GOVERNMENT: THE CASE OF ROMANIA

Abstract

The goal of the present study was to develop the profile of the social, economic, and political factors affecting trust in government. To accomplish with this goal a survey was conducted. A questionnaire was designed to gather the necessary information. The questionnaire was composed of 7 questions, unambiguous and easy to complete. The analysis revealed that the citizen's trust in the Romanian government is very low.

Keywords: trust, government, survey

JEL CODES: R58, C20

EVALUAREA ÎNCREDERII ÎN GUVERNARE: CAZUL ROMÂNIEI

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Rezumat

Scopul studiului este prezentarea profilului factorilor economici, sociali și politici care afectează încrederea în guvernare. Pentru a realiza acest lucru a fost folosit un chestionar alcatuit din 7 întrebări, foarte clare și simplu de completat. Analiza rezultatelor a arătat un grad scăzut de încredere al cetățenilor în guvernarea din România.

Cuvinte cheie: încredere, guvern, chestionar



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1. INTRODUCTION

Trust appeared once with the humanity and the development of social interaction. Almost every aspect of a person life is based in one or another way in trust (Colesca, 2009). According to Erikson (1963) trust begins to develop at birth and progresses upon one's psychosocial experiences. So, trust is a very rich concept, covering a wide range of relationships, conjoining a variety of objects. *"Trust occurs when parties holding certain favorable perceptions of each other allow this relationship to reach the expected outcomes"* (Wheless and Grotz, 1977).

Citizens' trust in government is crucial to the stability and legitimacy of democratic regimes (Androniceanu, 2009). So, many organizations over the world have conducted studies in order to measure the level of trust in various governments (Cheema, 2006): World Economic Forum, Accenture, BBC and Gallup International, Eurobarometer, Asia Barometer, Latinobarometro, UNPAN, UNDP, Transparency International, the focus being centered on the following specific areas:

- Trust and mistrust in institutions
- Corruption and governance
- Trust and mistrust in e-government
- Support for democracy
- Service delivery and access

Trust in government is a multi-faceted concept, determined by a large number of factors. In their examinations of trust on government, the research in the field has investigated the affects of the following factors:

- demographic factors, such as education, gender and age (Christensen and Lægreid 2002)
- the level and the type of political activity and political attitudes (Christensen and Lægreid 2003)
- individual experience (Kumlin 2002)
- political factors, such as political corruption and negative media attention (Nye 1997).

In the previous years, the citizens of Romania have experienced a number of events that underlined the declining power of government to control and protect society. The economic crisis, the decrease of the wages, the increase of VAT and the rise of unemployment led to unprecedented loss of confidence in the present government. Surveys conducted at nation level during the years 2010 and 2011 have shown that Romanians' trust in government is becoming lower and lower, reaching a minimum of 7% in February 2011.

2. METHODOLOGY

The goal of the present paper was to analyse the trust of Romanians in government. To accomplish with this goal a survey was conducted. A questionnaire was designed to gather the necessary information. The questionnaire was composed of 7 questions, unambiguous and easy for respondents to complete. The questionnaire was administered to 130 Romanian citizens older than 18 years, living in urban and rural areas during April-May 2011. 87 responses were received. After eliminating incomplete responses, we selected 83 usable responses as the sample. Figures 1-5 present the demographic profile of respondents.

| | Number of respondents | Percentage |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| Until 20 years | 13 | 15.66% |
| Between 20 and 30 years | 25 | 30.12% |
| Between 30 and 50 years | 22 | 26.51% |
| Over 50 years | 23 | 27.71% |
| TOTAL | 83 | 100% |

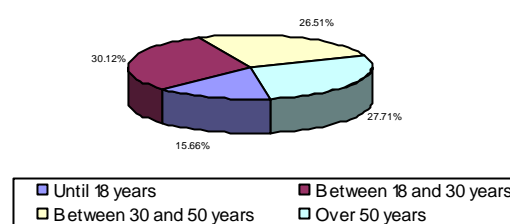


FIGURE 1 – THE AGE OF RESPONDENTS

| | Number of respondents | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| Male | 43 | 51.81% |
| Female | 40 | 48.19% |
| TOTAL | 83 | 100% |

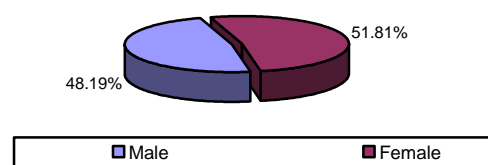


FIGURE 2 – THE GENDER OF RESPONDENTS

| | Number of respondents | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| Urban | 48 | 57.83% |
| Rural | 35 | 42.17% |
| TOTAL | 83 | 100% |

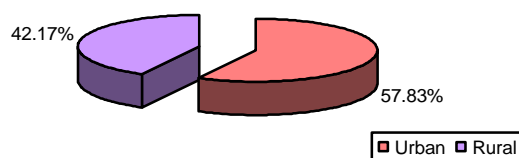


FIGURE 3 – THE REGION OF RESPONDENTS

| | Number of respondents | Percentage |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| Gymnasium | 14 | 16.87% |
| High school | 26 | 31.33% |
| Higher education | 19 | 22.89% |
| School of Arts and Crafts | 13 | 15.66% |
| Post high school | 11 | 13.25% |
| TOTAL | 83 | 100% |

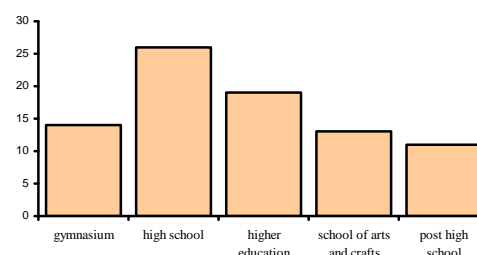


FIGURE 4 – THE EDUCATION OF RESPONDENTS

| | Number of respondents | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| I haven't any income | 13 | 15.66% |
| Maximum 500 RON | 23 | 27.71% |
| Between 501-1000 RON | 19 | 22.89% |
| Between 1001-2000 RON | 10 | 12.05% |
| Between 2001-4000 RON | 13 | 15.66% |
| Over 4000 RON | 5 | 6.02% |
| TOTAL | 83 | 100% |

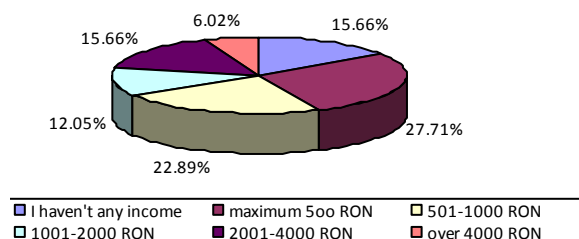


FIGURE 5 – THE INCOME OF RESPONDENTS

A special question was designed to capture the political orientation of the respondents. The survey results are presented in Figure 5.

| | Number of respondents | Percentage |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| PDL | 18 | 21.69% |
| PNL | 12 | 14.46% |
| PSD | 20 | 24.10% |
| PC | 5 | 6.02% |
| UNPR | 4 | 4.82% |
| Other | 7 | 8.43% |
| No political orientation | 17 | 20.48% |
| TOTAL | 83 | 100% |

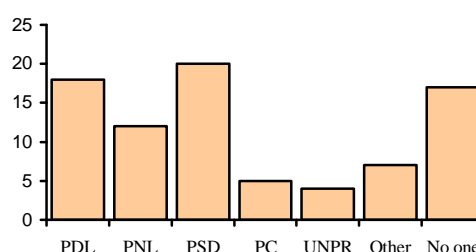


FIGURE 6 – POLITICAL ORIENTATION

Each respondent was asked to evaluate his/her level of trust on a scale from 0 (no trust at all) to 10 (a very high level of trust). The mean level of trust for the all sample was 2.89, a very low value.

In order to analyze the results we have used the One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). ANOVA allows determining if one given factor has a significant effect on dependent variable behavior across any of the groups under study (Hincu and Ene, 2005). The dependent variable was trust in government and the independent variables were: age, gender, region, education, income and political orientation.

Table 1 and Table 2 present the results of the ANOVA:

TABLE 1 - TEST OF HOMOGENEITY OF VARIANCES

| | Levene Statistic | df1 | df2 | Sig. |
|-----------------------|------------------|-----|-----|------|
| Age | 2.327 | 5 | 76 | .051 |
| Gender | 24.166 | 5 | 76 | .000 |
| Region | .274 | 5 | 76 | .926 |
| Education | .577 | 5 | 76 | .718 |
| Income | .725 | 5 | 76 | .607 |
| Political orientation | .698 | 5 | 76 | .626 |

TABLE 2 – ANOVA RESULTS

| | F | Sig. |
|-----------------------|-------|------|
| Age | 1.247 | .292 |
| Region | .538 | .777 |
| Education | 1.048 | .401 |
| Income | .761 | .603 |
| Political orientation | .778 | .590 |

The Levene homogeneity test shows if the groups are homogenous from the variance point of view. In the present case $p = >0.05$ for all variables except gender. After Anova analysis, for all the variables $p > 0.05$, this showing that the sample has a homogenous behavior with respect with trust in government and neither variable has a positive influence over trust.

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